

*Voices Against Violence works towards the elimination of domestic and sexual violence and stalking through direct service, education, and systems change.*

### ***Our History***

Voices Against Violence has been providing services to survivors of domestic & sexual violence in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties since it was founded in 1980. The organization started as a team of community members dedicated to supporting victims, and soon after established itself as Women in Crisis in 1981. That organization grew into the Abuse and Rape Crisis center (under the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity), which supported survivors, trained volunteers, educated community members, and created policies & procedures. The organization flourished over the years, especially after the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1995. In 2003, our emergency shelter, Laurie's House, was established and we changed our name to Voices Against Violence.

### ***Our Philosophy***

*Voices Against Violence serves all folks on the gender & sexuality spectrum.*

We understand that experiencing violence and reaching out for help is complicated and scary – we strive to support survivors through these difficult experiences.

At Voices Against Violence, we use a survivor-centered approach; this means we support survivors to make the decisions they feel are best. We believe that everyone has strengths that can help them achieve their own goals around relationships, sexuality, and safety. We also meet survivors “where they’re at”, supporting them in their current situation and desires, and never judging based on the past.

Voices Against Violence also works to promote systems change as a way to support survivors and end violence. By bringing to light systemic oppression and violence, we hope to create a world that works for victims & survivors.

### ***Our services***

24 Hour Hotline: We have a confidential 24 hour hotline that folks can call for support around domestic/sexual violence, dating violence (youth relationships) and stalking. Friends, family and community partners are welcome to call for any questions, support or navigating situations. Voices Against Violence advocates honor survivor confidentiality, and we hold that confidentiality to all people and systems unless we get the survivor's permission to speak on their behalf.

Chat Line: We have a confidential chat line during business hours, monitored by Voices Against Violence advocates.

Housing Advocacy: Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for survivors and families. Voices Against Violence works with survivors that are fleeing their relationships. We support survivors in our emergency housing, such as our shelter, Laurie's House, and hotels, while our housing advocate works with them on permanent housing options. We have a Transitional Housing program that allows survivors (and their children) to be housed in an apartment for up to two years while they are able to prepare to live independently.

Legal Advocacy: Voices Against Violence advocates work with survivors that are engaging in the criminal justice system because of violence that their partner perpetrated against them. Our advocates also support survivors that are seeking civil protection orders such as Relief From Abuse Orders, as well as Sexual Assault/Stalking Orders. We partner with an attorney from Legal Aid for consultation and representation.

Education: Voices Against Violence works in Franklin/Grand Isle schools to teach children/youth about consent, empathy, boundaries and healthy relationships as a tool to prevent domestic and sexual violence. Our advocates also educate the community around domestic, sexual, dating violence and stalking- as well as how to serve survivors best. We are able to do trainings with community partners, just let us know and we can collaborate!

Medical Advocacy: We have a partnership Northwestern Medical Center to support anyone that is accessing the emergency room around domestic or sexual violence they have experienced. The survivor doesn't have to talk with us, but we always go to the emergency room so they have the option.

General Advocacy: *Voices Against Violence works with all folks on the gender spectrum.* Survivors are able to drop into our confidential office space, or call our hotline to get support from an advocate. Whatever the need is around someone experiencing violence, we will help with support and options- day and night!

All About Kids - Supervised Visitation Program: Supervised visits are visits between a child and their non- residential parent in a safe space free of conflict. All About Kids provides access to the parent who does not live in the home , enabling the child to have or create a positive relationship with that parent in a supervised setting.

Healing Together grant: Our agency has a grant that allows us to step beyond crisis work and work to heal the experiences survivors and children are go greatly affected by. This grant is able to help buy products or toys that help children that enable safety and joy. We have also been able to purchase gift certificates to local events and activities like the new town pool, reiki, massage and other neuropathic forms of healing care. Another piece of this funding is called BRANCH, which allows us to connect children and families to clinical therapy and mental health clinicians in an accessible and holistic way.

## **Voices Against Violence's All About Kids Supervised Visitation Program**

The visits occur at our site, All About Kids, at 95 South Main St in St Albans.

This service is appropriate whenever there are safety concerns for the residential parent, the visiting parent and the children.

### **What are the benefits?**

*For children:* Children can see their visiting parent consistently at a safe place.

*For residential parents:* Parent dropping off a child at AAK knows that the visit is monitored by trained staff in a secure location.

*For non-residential parents:* They have a place to build or continue to build a relationship with their child.

### **Who can make a referral to the program at AAK?**

Courts, department of children & families, parents.

### **Why use this program instead of a relative or friend?**

Staff is trained to observe and listen. They recognize when to step in and redirect if the conversations are inappropriate or the visiting parent's behavior is inappropriate. The visits are scheduled for the same time each week so both parties and children can anticipate this block of time. Sometimes a relative holds bias and is not able to be neutral when monitoring the visit and may not realize how conversations involving future plans or questions about the residential parent can be damaging to a child. Sometimes, a family setting visit can still include the threat or presence of domestic violence, sexual assault and

stalking in our reasons for using a supervised visitation center. Staff has ground rules that each parent is aware of and safety precautions in place for all participants involved with the visit.

***We root ourselves in anti-oppression work because:***

“We are not, just as survivors are not, single-issue people. We are all impacted by the ways our identities, cultures, and experiences interact with other forces in the world. To provide good care to survivors, we must use a lens that enables us to see survivors as their whole selves, including how their experiences and options are impacted by systems of oppression.” – National Sexual Violence Resource Center

Working from anti-oppression and trauma-informed frameworks also enables us to better understand how our own identities intersect with our work as advocates and people making change. Rooting in anti-oppression work enables us to understand systemic and societal barriers that both uphold domestic & sexual violence, and make it difficult for survivors to seek support.

At Voices Against Violence, we do our best to always hold both truths accountable: The gendered nature of violence toward the preservation of a misogynist status quo, and the perpetuation of cycles of violence in all forms of intimate relationships.